



TO THE
Most Reverend Father in GOD,
His GRACE

THOMAS,

By Divine Providence

Lord Archbishop of Canterbury,
Primate and Metropolitan of all
England, &c.

MY LORD,

YOUR Grace being not
only by Your Place and
Station, but by Your own
Choice and voluntary Act,
the *Grand Patron of our Reli-*
gion, it cannot be improper
to present You with these
brief Papers, which, though

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in

The Epistle Dedicatory.

in themselves very mean and inconsiderable, and unworthy of Your Grace's View, are a Vindication of that *Holy Cause* against the repeated Cavils and bold Insults of *Atheistical Spirits*, who (as Your Grace with a very deep Resentment and Regret * observes) are of late grown very numerous. How vigorously Your Lordship hath attacked this sort of Men, is well known to the World; and that hitherto they have not been able to bring about their impious Designs, is in great part owing to Your Lord-

* Sermon of the Folly of Atheism. Sermon at the Queen's Funeral.

ship's

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ship's successful Attempts. I presume, from the Encouragement which so Illustrious an Example hath given me, to engage in the same Cause, that is, to lay open the *Folly* and *Absurdity* of their Pretences, and withall to discover some of those Heads and Springs whence the Atheistick Apprehensions of these present Times arise, and whereby they are fed and nourished. Which I hope will be of good use to those who desire to be caution'd against the Venom of this Raging Evil, and will in some measure operate even on those who are infected and

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corrupted with it already.

I am sensible how Precious Your Grace's Minutes are in this time of extraordinary Business and Emergency ; and therefore I will not be injurious to the Publick by any farther Applications to Your Grace. Only I superadd my hearty Prayers for Your Health and long Life, wherein the Common Welfare and Happiness both of Church and State are so much involved : And so I subscribe myself,

Your Grace's

Most Dutiful Son,

and Devoted Servant,

John Edwards.

THE PREFACE.

I *Designing, by the Divine Help and Conduct, to defend the Existence and Providence of God by Arguments drawn both from the Greater and the Lesser World; it is my Request to the Reader, that he would accept of this Brief Essay in the mean time, which I conceive will be a suitable Introduction and Preparative to that other Undertaking. For as in that intended Discourse I shall carefully trace and discover the Footsteps of the Divinity every where; so here I make it my Business to shew how frequent and obvious the Occasions of Disbelieving it are. By which means we shall effectually learn how to purge our Minds of those ill Qualities which naturally are subservient to Atheism; we shall know how to remove those Stumbling-blocks, to answer those Objections, and to clear up those Mistakes which usually betray Men to this Infidelity. And thus there will be a*
Way

The PREFACE.

Way made for what I design. Persons will be fitted to receive and retain the Impressions which those Topicks that I shall afterwards make choice of will enstamp upon their Minds: And I hope the Age, which hath lately been stigmatized with Marks of Atheism, will for the future be renowned for these truly illustrious and glorious Characters.

I will only farther acquaint the Reader, that some part of what I here offer (viz. such Particulars as I thought were convenient for an usual and mix'd Auditory) was deliver'd lately in one of the City-Pulpits; and the other Heads, with their Enlargement (which are of somewhat a different strain, and are chiefly adapted to the Curious and Inquisitive) are an Addition since. But as I have added several things, so I have omitted some, at the Desire of those who are concern'd in both. This is all that I had to advertise the Reader of; and so I bid him

Farewel.

SOME

SOME
THOUGHTS
Concerning the
Causes and Occasions
OF
ATHEISM.

THAT the World was not void of *Atheists* in King David's time, may be gathered from his Words in *Psalms* xiv. 1. *The Fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.* But it is exceedingly to be lamented, that the number of them is much increased since, yea, that it is the Unhappiness of this Present Age, to be pester'd with

with not a few of them. Notwithstanding those cogent and incontestable Arguments for a Deity which are suggested from the Holy Scriptures, and the Natural Reasonings of sober Minds, there is still an *Atheistical* Spirit prevailing in the World. There is a sort of Men (if I may call *them* so whose bold Infidelity is so Irrational and Brutish) that reckon the Notion of a *God* to be a Melancholick Conceit, and the mere Effect of Credulity and Ignorance. Yea, there are some that pass for *Wits*, who strive for the honour of being accounted the most *Able Atheists* of the Age.

Wherefore, instead of rehearsing or urging those Topicks which are wont to be produced for the Proof of the *Divinity* ; my Business at present shall be, to enquire into the *Causes of Atheism*, which now vaunts it self with an impudent Fore-head,
and

and begins to boast that it hath got Footing in a great part of the World.

I will search into the *Occasions*, either real or pretended (for I will mention both) of this Reigning Mischief. I will shew you on what *Grounds* the Impious do at this Day not only, with the Psalmist's *Atheistical Fool*, say in their Hearts, but openly and avowedly proclaim to the World, that *there is no God*, that is, no Supreme Over-ruling Being of infinite Perfection, no eternally Wise, Intelligent, and Omniscient Substance that at first gave Existence to all things, and ever since upholds them, and takes care of them.

I. I assign *Ignorance* to be one great Spring of this gross Unbelief. As *knowing* as the World is at this day, there are too many People of inferiour Rank whose Education hath been so unhappy, that they have

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have not been instructed in the
Common Principles of Religion;
and they are more unhappy in that
they will not allow themselves time
and leisure to look into their own
Minds, and to rouse those inbred
Notions which are implanted there
by God, and which would (if they
would give way) lead them to him.
Wherefore it is the Concern of all
Persons, to know how to converse
with Themselves, and to rife their
own Breasts, that they may find a
Deity written there: and besides,
they should be careful to acquire
such a stock of Knowledge from
without, that they may understand
their Religion, and not be seduc'd
by Atheistical Notions that fly up
and down every where.

But this first Cause which I as-
sign of *Atheism*, is not only to be
found in some meaner sort of Peo-
ple who have not time (as they or-
der

der their Affairs) to think of a God, but in others of a higher Rank and Quality: for by *Ignorance* I mean a wilful and sottish stifling of natural Notions and Impressions: And this sometimes prevails in Men of great Parts and Knowledge.

Think it not strange that I reckon such Persons in the number of the *Ignorant*; for (to speak impartially) they are so: and this was the Sense of the * wisest *Pagans* long since. For to have no Knowledge, and to stifle it, is the same thing; which is the Case of these Men: they make it their business to choak the innate Principles of their Minds, and to disregard those Notices which their Natures suggest to them. Thus these Persons are stubbornly and obstinately Ignorant. Whatever their Pretences and Boa-

* Ἀνόντων ἀνάγκη καὶ ἀθεοῦ ἵδ, καὶ ἡ ἀθεοῦ ἀνόντων.
Hierocl.

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stings be, their Atheism proceeds from want of Learning and Wit. For 'tis not the part of a Learned and Ingenious Man to destroy the Notions of Mankind, and pull down what hath been built by the universal Suffrage of the World, and in its place to erect a Conceit of his own. Some may take such for Brainish and Scholar-like sort of Men, but then these are so without *Thinking*; for it is the want of this that makes them what they are. Or, to say the best of this kind of Men, an *Atheist* is but a *half-witted* Person: He hath perhaps made some Attempts in Science, but to little purpose: He hath attain'd to some slight and trivial Notions; but hath not penetrated into the heart of Things; and thence it comes to pass, that he is full of Doubts and Cavils, which he is able to raise, but he hath not Skill
and

the Causes of Atheism. 7

and Ability enough to answer them. Wherefore it was excellently said of my Lord Bacon, * *A little Philosophy inclines mens minds to Atheism*; but depth in Philosophy brings mens minds about to Religion and a Deity. Thus though this misshapen Monster would be thought to be the genuine issue of True Wisdom and Sound Knowledge, yet it is really the daughter of an Affected Ignorance. Wherefore to secure your selves against Atheism, be careful that you blind not your minds; willingly receive the rays of light into your souls, cherish all sound notions and conceptions, and by all proper methods bring your selves to a right understanding, and steady embracing of all the Fundamental Principles of your Religion.

II. There is great *Disingenuity* and *unhandsome Dealing* in the case,

* His Essays.

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else we should not have so much *Atheism*. Here I will prove, that they do not act fairly, but that they are *Ungenteel*, which perhaps will affect these Persons more than any thing that I can say. What they are willing and forward to grant in other matters, and on other occasions, they refuse to grant here, yea they utterly deny it, though there be the same reason for one as the other. This plainly appears by their *Objections*.

As first, they tell us they have no Sensible Notices of a God, and therefore they can't admit of it; for all the knowledge (say they) which we have of things, is deriv'd to us from Sense. But here we see that these Men are *Partial* and *Dis- ingenuous*, for they will not deny that there are many things which they judge not of by Sense; they grant that the swiftness of Motion
often-

oftentimes out-runs the nimblest Sense, and the Observation of the quickest eye; yet they do not deny the Motion it self: The Element of *Air*, in which they daily converse, is not seen, nor is it heard or felt (unless when 'tis extraordinarily moved and disturbed, which is but seldom:) nor will they say they taste it; and 'tis as certain that they cannot smell it, (for this is only the Vehicle of Smells, but is not it self the object of that sense) and yet these nice Gentlemen do not deny the Existence of the *Air*. They can by none of their Senses discern the Motion of the *Sun*, *Moon*, and *Stars* (or, as perhaps they think it most proper to say, the Earth), and yet there is not a man of them that denies that they move. It can't be determin'd by Sense, whether the Sun be bigger than it appears to be, and there-

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fore *Epicurus* (who was a great
Man for Sense) held it was of no
greater dimension than it seems to
the Eye to be ; yea, of no greater
heat in it self than it seems to the
Feeling to be here on Earth. And
the Atheistical Poet, who borrow'd
his Notions from him, was of the
same mind,

*Nec nimio solis major rota, nec minor ardor
Esse potest nostris quàm sensibus esse videtur.*
Lucret. lib. 5.

This is certain, that the things
that are least discernible act most.
The Animal Spirits, which do all
the great things in our bodies, are
themselves Imperceptible. They are
the Insensible and Invisible Parts, as
Spirits, Wind, Subtile matter, Ex-
halations, which (being agitated)
do the chieft Exploits in Nature.
There are Fine Particles and Atoms
diffused through all bodies whatso-
ever ; and these are the cause of
Sense

the Causes of Atheism. II

Sense and Motion in Animals : by help of these, Minerals, Plants, and all Vegetables, are brought to perfection. These Invisible Agents effect strange things, and act most wonderfully in the World. The *Nutritious Juyce* in the Nerves, if we may credit the famous *Glisson*, is of mighty use and influence : yet (as he confesses himself) there are no Cavities to be seen to convey it, and none of this *Succus* is ever discern'd in the dissecting of Animals. Notwithstanding this, some Physicians of the most piercing Judgment, have granted (whatever they do now) the real being of it. And in other Instances it might be shew'd, that *Sense* is not always made a Judge even in sensible Objects, but we gather the being and operation of them from Reason and Discourse. This the persons whom we are now dealing with do not deny, but even

practise it themselves, and are willing to allow of it. Why therefore are they so void of Ingenuity and fair-dealing, as not to admit of the same in the case that is before us? Why do they most irrationally deny a God because they do not apprehend him by Bodily sense, when-as they judge not of some other things by Sense, nay though they be proper objects of it? This is a plain proof of these mens wilful Prejudice and Partiality, especially if I add, that *God* is infinitely farther removed from our most exalted Apprehensions, than the *Sun* (of which we spoke before) is from this Earth. This Glorious Sun
* dwelleth in that light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, or can see.

Secondly, they tell us that there are *Great Difficulties* in conceiving a

* 1 Tim. 6. 16.

God, and they are loth to swallow these down: and more especially the notion of a *Spirit*, i. e. a Being that is void of Matter and Body is too hard to be conceiv'd by them, and therefore seeing we hold *God* to be a *Spirit*, they can form no conception of him. I will reply to both the parts of this Objection distinctly: and first as to the General Cavil, That this notion is accompanied with *Difficulties*, I answer, there are great *Difficulties* in other matters, which yet they leap over with ease, and do not disbelieve the things themselves because of the *Difficulties* that attend them. It is very hard to explain how a little Wheel of two inches diameter, fixed on the same Axil with two greater Wheels of ten inches a-piece, moving together (the greater ones on the ground, the lesser on a table) should move over the very same

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space in equal time, with equal rotation with the greater ones : and yet the thing it self is not denied by any one. And many other puzzling Problems might be mentioned, where the Hardship doth not discourage them from embracing them. But I will instance in one of their own Hypotheles, viz. that of *Atoms*, which they chuse to solve the Original of the World by, that they may evade the *insuperable Difficulties* (as they think them) of the Acknowledgment of a *God*. If they say that these *Atoms* had their Existence from *Themselves*, then instead of denying one *God*, they assert many, for Self-existence is of the very nature and essence of a *Deity* ; wherefore if they were all from themselves, they are all *Gods*. If they say that *other Matter* or *Atoms* were the first Cause of these, then they run to Infinity, and no body
is

is able to trace them. If they say they are of *Nothing*, then they had as good have begun with that, and have confessed in plain terms, that the World was made out of *No*-thing, and then they come to us, but they are resolved they will not do that. Thus they are confounded as to the *Rise* and *Origine* of their Atoms.

Then, as to their *Motion*, whence had they that? either of themselves or of an other? They could not have it of *Themselves*, for we see it is not of the nature of Matter to move: it is in it self a dull and inert, a lumpish and unactive thing. If this Motion was impress'd on it by an *Other*, then that was either some *other Matter*, or *something else*. If they hold the former, they run again *in infinitum*, and he is a distracted man that will run after them. If they maintain the latter,
they

they betray their Cause, and acknowledge a *Spirit*, for there is no real and substantial thing besides Matter and Spirit. In brief, whether the former or the latter Assertion be held by them, they do in a manner own what they deny ; for we will not disagree about the Name, if we can agree on the Thing it self. That Being or Agent which gave the first Motion to things, is *God*.

If after all they say, that Matter had this Motion by *Chance*, and so was neither from it self or any other, they talk more absurdly and wildly than before ; for *Chance* is a Word made to signifie only the *unexpected happening of a thing*, but doth not import that there was no Cause or Author at all of it. But however, if they will stand to this (as generally they do) that Matter at first had a strong power by *Chance* to jump into an Orderly System

stem of *Heavens, Earth, Sea, &c.* then I ask them, What is the reason that there hath been nothing of this nature since? What reason can be given why all the Atoms and Effluvia in the several Ages and Successions of Time, ever since this visible World had its being, have not produced some excellent Frame either like this World, or of an other nature? What! is this *Lucky Chance* quite ceas'd? Is this *Fortunate Lottery* at an end? Is there no probability of a brave fortuitous hit once again? Is there no such fine piece of work as that of *Sun, Moon,* and *Stars,* to be expected once more? No: there is an utter despair of it; for from Eternity (according to them) to this moment, we have had no such good Luck, and therefore what reason have we to expect any such afterwards? yea indeed, what ground have these
Chance-

Chance-Philosophers to think that there ever was any such thing? What reason have they to declare it to be their firm persuasion that Matter was set into motion from Eternity, and that by the frisking of its Particles, it at last danced into a World? yet this and all the rest they believe and vouch rather than they will hold that the beginning of things was from an *Intelligent and Wise Being*.

It appears hence, that they will say any thing rather than acknowledge themselves to be in the wrong: they make nothing of talking idly and impertinently, of running into Banter and Nonsense, as we have heard. They can give credit to this extravagant Fancy, that an everlasting Juncto of *Atoms* did without Counsel and Knowledge club together to make the World. They can tamely submit

to

to this unaccountable Maxim, that these infinite Bodies, after eternal Brushings, Agitations, Encounters, Knockings, Tiltings, Justlings, Jumblings, fell by mere Chance into this excellent Frame that we now behold. Thus the Atheist, to avoid some seeming Difficulties, runs into those which are really so, yea into the greatest Absurdities imaginable. If it be difficult to conceive the Self-existence and Eternity of one God, surely it is insuperably so, to conceive infinite Matter moving it self, and giving Being to it self from all Eternity. It is plain then, that these men deal not fairly and uprightly, but wilfully deceive themselves and others. They cry up Reason, and yet maintain things which are repugnant to ordinary Discourse and the Common Dictates of Reason; and therefore are rather to be exploded than with
much

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much industry to be confuted. They cannot only swallow down, but digest *Absurdities* when they think fit, and at other times they can fancy them where there are none, nor any shadow of any.

Then as to that particular Difficulty, *viz.* That the Notion of a *Spirit* is inconceivable, and therefore they have no conception of a *God*; I return this brief Answer, That if this which they say be true, if it be impossible to apprehend the Idea of a *Spirit*, then there is no such thing: and if so, then *Matter alone* must do all things in the World, but particularly, it must have *Understanding* and *Knowledge*, it must *think* and *reason*, for (whatever the precarious Hypothesis of Atoms suggests) the Curious frame of this World could not be erected without Knowledge and Wisdom, and it cannot be kept up and managed

naged without these. Now, I appeal to any considerate man, whether the flat denying of this, and the asserting that the *Dimensions of a Body* are *Intellectual*, that to be *Long* and to be *Broad*, and to be *Deep*, are Acts and Exertments of *Reason* or *Will*, and (in short) that *Extension* is *Thinking*, be not far greater Absurdities than any thing they imagine to be in the notion of a God. It is a sign therefore that these men make Difficulties where there are none, and do not take notice of them where they are. I could here prove that our Faculties may form as clear, explicit, and distinct an Idea of a *Spirit* (which they so much boggle and startle at) as they do of their own Existence, or any other Principle in Nature; but this I have made my task in another place.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, they tell us they cannot believe a Deity, because there are no Proper *Demonstrations* to prove it. For you must know, that these Persons whom we have to do with at present, are great men for *Demonstrations*. But I answer, The Existence of many things in the World cannot be made out by *Demonstration*, strictly so called, and yet no man questions the reality of them. The skilfullest Mathematician under Heaven can't demonstrate that the Sun shines, and yet there is no doubt at all of it, and he would be counted a Mad-man that denies it. We are morally certain of many things which we cannot possibly demonstrate ; but this doth not hinder us from yielding a firm assent to them. And 'tis certain, that an Assent is as firm on Moral grounds as on rigid *Demonstrations*, when the matter is capable

ble of no other grounds; for the Evidence is proportionable to the Matter to be proved, and that is as much as can be desired by any intelligent man. There can be no greater than a Moral Certainty of a Deity: for there are no grounds of it Mathematically Demonstrative. But by being Morally Certain we are certain enough, and as certain as the nature of the thing will bear. This should content any Rational man, and it is unreasonable to demand any more.

Then, as for those *Demonstrations* which they talk so much of, they cannot but acknowledge, that as they are sometimes managed they yield but little Certainty. For, not to speak now of the old *Academicks* and *Scepticks*, who denied *Geometrical Principles*; or of *Demetrius*, *Sextus Empiricus*, *Epicurus*, *Zeno*, and others of the Ancient Philosophers

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who

who reason'd against them, I will mention some of our *Moderns* (and those of great Skill and Learning) who have disagreed about Mathematical Proofs, and thereby proclaim to the World their Uncertainty. The greatest Astrologers hugely differ as to the distance of the Sun from the Earth. It is nearer to it ten thousand miles than it was, saith *Copernicus*. But *J. Scaliger* would have the Writings of those Authors who hold the Sun is nearer to the Earth than 'twas in former days, * *to be razed out with sponges, or the Writers themselves to be corrected with stripes*. And other very good Astronomers are so far from consenting to this, that they maintain the Sun is farther off from the Earth than it was at first. And yet on both sides they proceed on *Mathematical* grounds. There is no

* *Exercitat. 99.*

Mathematical Demonstration for Comets being above or below the Moon, saith * *Ricciolus*, a very skilful Mathematician: but others of that Faculty have pretended much to the contrary. The *Paralax* is well known to be a Mathematical business, that by which the Planets are judged to be higher or lower: but the greatest Astronomers have quarrell'd with one another about this Doctrine. *Tycho* is for it; but *Claramontius* is against it; and *Galileus* even explodes the Proof brought from the *Paralax*. Dr. *Wallis* and Mr. *Hobbes's* Contrasts in Print, shew that *Mathematicks* are dubious: and this latter (who was so stiff an Opposer of the Notion of a Spirit, and consequently of a Deity) finds fault with all Geometricians, old and new, in his Book entituled *The Principles and*

* De Cometis.

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Ratiocination of Geometricians. *Car-*
tes's Dioptricks and Geometry are pre-
tended to be baffled by other Lear-
ned Mathematicians, as *Bourdin,*
Hobbes, Fermat. Franciscus du Lau-
rens, and *Dr. Wallis,* scuffle about
a Mathematical Problem. So that
it seems it is not an Infallible Sci-
ence. *I am certain,* saith * *Dr. Hen-*
ry More, that *Mathematical Certitude*
it self is not absolute. There is an
Essay of *Dr. Pell* to shew the Errors
and Mistakes of the best and most
celebrated Astronomers for want
of better Knowledge in *Geometry.*
Even † *Monsieur Malebranch,* a
profound Admirer and Follower of
Descartes, acknowledges that in his
Geometry there are some footsteps of the
weakness of the humane mind. And I
will conclude with the Words of
One that was known to be eminent

* Preface before his Philosoph. Writings. † Search
after Truth, Book 3. Chap. 4.

in Mathematical Studies, * *Even in Geometry and Arithmetick* (saith he) *how many things are forcibly concluded to be true which are inexplicable, unimaginable, incomprehensible?*

Thus you see the Mathematical Certainty which some men talk of, is not so easily to be attain'd as they fancy. Disputes have place in *Geometry*; *Demonstrations* sometimes prove to be *Paralogisms*. But as for a Mathematical Demonstration for the proof of a GOD, it is vainly and unreasonably required, because there can be no such thing, for the matter will not bear it. Wherefore though † some *Divines* have been great *Philosophers* and *Mathematicians*, yet they never attempted any such thing. A man

* Bishop *Ward's* Serm. † Copernicus, Lansbergius, Clavius, Petavius, Tacquet, Scheiner, Gassendus, Fromondus, Kircher, Ricciolus, Oughtred, Ward, Wallis, More, Glanvil.

must not expect to have every thing proved the same way. If we have things evidenced by the Arguments which they are capable of, it is satisfactory, and every wise man rests in it. And these men themselves do so in other things: they acquiesce in that Evidence which the things admit of, and they seek no farther. Which shews, that in the present Case they are *Disingenuous*, and *Cross-grain'd*, and act merely out of Prejudice; which was the thing I undertook to make good. Their *Insincerity* nourishes their *Atheism*. Therefore let us have a care that we give way to no such thing.

III. Another Cause of this Pernicious Opinion, is, *Ostentation of Wit*. For you may take notice, that this Mischievous Plant springs from Contrary Seeds. As before this kind of men put on a very grave and solid Countenance, so now they

they shew themselves to be very Pleasant and Airy, and set up for the Art of Drolling. Before they appear'd like Philosophers, now they come upon the Stage like Buffoons. Then with a Magisterial Grimace they affected Demonstrations ; now nothing will please them but the Comical part. It is observable, that they are a sort of Jestling, Scoffing People, giving themselves to Railery and Burlesque. And it is this Jocular Humour that in part betrays them to *Atheism*, for they take liberty to jest with their Maker. These witty and facetious Folks must needs play with Heaven, and laugh God out of his being. They are defective in sound Learning and Judgment, and in the place of these have a fanciful way of Jeering, which they addict themselves immoderately to. *Democritus* was the

great Asserter of Eternal Matter, and thought that the Casual Motion of it was the Cause of all things: the influence of which Principle on his Cogitations, made him at last laugh at every thing he saw, and mock at all Actions and Occurrences of humane life; for 'tis certain that if they are all by Chance, they are to be denied. The Followers of this Great Man have learnt from him to be *Laughing Philosophers*; and there are abundance of this Sect now-a-days. This I look upon as one Cause of the great *Atheism* of this Age. They think *their Tongues are their own*, and they may say what they please; and they persuade themselves, that what is wittily said is well said. Hence these Sparks venture to ridicule Religion, to scoff at Virtue and Piety, and to mock God himself. Then at last they really believe what they fancy'd,

fancy'd, and jestingly utter'd; and they assert in good earnest what at first perhaps was said only in Meriment. Wherefore, to guard your selves from *Atheism*, be always very Serious, and abhor the sportful vein, the flashy fancy of these men, who think they can't be men of Parts unless they make a mock of God and Religion. Whereas the Brightest and most Accomplish'd Heads ever exploded this: and in our own Nation we have abundant Instances of this, that even the * Wisest and the Wittiest Men (tho no Church-men or Divines) have exprels'd their deep sense of *God* and serving him, and defied the contrary Profane *Atheistical* humour.

IV. *Pride* and *Self-conceit* may justly be reckon'd another Spring

* *Sir Tho. More, Sir Phil. Sidney, Sir W. Raleigh, Sir Hen. Wotton, Lord Bacon, Mr. Selden, Mr. Cowley, &c.*
of

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of Atheism. Men in this and former Ages have thought it below them to go tamely along with the generality of Mankind in asserting a Deity. They would be thought wiser than others: and consequently they affect to go against a commonly receiv'd Notion. But more particularly these High-Flyers account it base and sneaking to listen to an Old Story of *Religion*, and to submit their Belief to the *Harangues of the Parsons*, as they are pleas'd to word it. Especially *Great Men* are apt to be possessed with this Pride, and consequently to be Atheistical. They strongly incline to King *Alphonfus's* impious Bravado, *That if he had been present at the Creation, he would have framed the World better than 'tis now.* There is in many an excessive Desire of a Name and Vogue; and they think to obtain them by scorning the Common way,

way, and going out of the beaten road, by giving the Lye to all Mankind. And though one would think that they might shew the subtilty of their Wit by diving farther into things than the Vulgar, and not by casting off the agreed Sentiments of Mankind; by refining and improving the Principles of Nature, and not by nulling and evacuating them; yet they choose the latter, that they may (as they think) give the greater proof of their Wit and Parts, and that it may be seen that they are able to weather a Cause be it never so bad. To maintain this all sober Considerations are postpon'd; they superciliously renounce (when they are in the Humour) all Reason and Arguments; they arrogantly resolve to hold the Conclusion, whatever becomes of the poor Premises. *Atheism* owes its Being much to this,

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this, as I apprehend ; as I think it it is sufficiently evident from what I have said before, when I shew'd that they chuse rather to maintain the greatest Absurdities, than to adhere to a Received Truth. Wherefore that we may effectually prevent this Folly in our selves, let us banish Presumption, Confidence, and Self-Conceit ; let us extirpate all Pride and Arrogance ; let us not list our selves in the number of Capricious Opiniatours.

V. *Undue Apprehensions* of a Deity joyn'd with *Superstition* are the high road to Atheism. Those that think amiss of God will easily be enclined to question his Existence. It is too true that men model the Divinity according to their own fancies : the Creature fashions his Creator. Or, like him that engraved his own Image in that of the Goddess, they shape themselves and
figure

figure out their own absurd notions and conceits, whilest they pretend to give the *Pourtraiture* of God. Therefore imposing of false Doctrines concerning the *Attributes* of God is very pernicious, for they are destructive of his very being and nature. It is no wonder that when these come to be scann'd and examined, men doubt of the very existence of God, because so irrational and absurd things are attributed to him. They are loth to think there is such a One, or they wish there were not. So that they endeavour to destroy that which they can't endure. Thus mistakes and misprisions concerning God lead to Atheism. False Conceptions of a Deity expunge at last the belief of one.

And so 'twas of old in Paganism, *Idolatry* was the great mother of *Atheism* : gross *Superstition* undermined

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mined the Godhead. It hath been
falsly and blasphemously said that
* *Fear* was it which first introduced
a God into the world : but yet it
is certainly true that This with some
persons hath expelled the notion of
him out of the world: for they be-
ing *Timerous* and *Melancholick*
create to themselves strange fancies
concerning Him whom they are to
worship, and represent him to their
thoughts as *Severe* and *Tyrannical*.
And the *Gentile* Priests and Rulers
laid hold on this passion of *Fear*,
and did what they could to pro-
mote and heighten it, that thereby
they might keep the people in awe.
To which purpose they invented
Innumerable Rites and Ceremonies,
many of which were harsh, trouble-
som and afflictive. So that Bigotry
and Excess in Religion made way
for none at all: and when they were

* *Primus in orbe Deos fecit timor.* — *Pap. Stat.*

weari-
ed

wearied with the intolerable burden of it they cried out, with that Non-sensical Atheist,

Tantum Religio potuit suadere malorum.

Then Religion it self and the Author of it were discarded. This was caused by the *Undue Representations* which were made of God: the Priests would have the Superstitious Bigots believe that the *Divine Numen* could not be appeased without those wild Observances. This is that which *Plutarch* took notice of, telling us that * from such gross, absurd and extravagant Devotion men came to disregard a Deity, and to conclude there is None rather than to believe there can be Such a one, one that is delighted with so unaccountable Ceremonies and Usages. Therefore, to shut out Atheism, let us have right concepti-

* Περὶ Δησιδαιμονίας.

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ons of the Supreme Being whom we worship and serve. It concerns us to assert *rightly* the notion of God, lest otherwise we slide into a disbelief of any. Who misrepresenteth the Divine Being is in a ready way to deny him.

VI. *Corrupt Affections and Lives* (for I will joyn both these together, because they are never asunder) make men *Atheists*. Men of depraved minds and manners doubt of all Religion because they Like none, and at last they flatly deny what they Love not. An Atheist first desires and wishes no God, and his desires and wishes work on his Understanding. His Willingness to have it so enclines him to believe it. He easily credits what he longs for : his Affection corrupts his Judgment. Thus the indulging of Lust and Vice dispose a man to Atheism. To which purpose observe the Soil where this
Poison-

Poisonous Weed springs up, grows, and thrives most, *viz.* in the Courts of Debauch'd Princes, among such Nobility and Gentry, and in Great Cities where vicious and prophane living is most in fashion. They are lewd and dissolute in their manners, and give themselves up wholly to the satisfying of their Lusts: and this naturally prejudices them against the belief of a God and a life to come. Nothing doth so much extinguish all apprehensions of these as Carnal Pleasures. He that lives dissolutely and wickedly can't easily entertain the notion of a God, for 'tis counter to his course of Living. Therefore he goes on in his Debauchery, and huffs and swaggers, and perhaps swears by the Divinity that there is none. It is plain that this sort of men decry a God, because they would not be obliged by his Laws. Sensuality

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makes

makes them desirous to remove all stops of a wicked life, and therefore they whet their wits (such as they are) to annihilate Religion, and to extirpate a Deity. An abhorrence of the Practical part of Piety engages them against the Theory. Their Lives influence on their Belief. They are addicted to Atheism by their Lewd and Prophane Courses.

For we must observe this, that these two mutually advance one another. As Atheism is the highway to Wickedness (which the Psalmist takes notice of when he saith, *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God: Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity, Psal. 53. 1.*) so 'tis as true that Wickedness is the original of Atheism and Infidelity. For 'twas rightly said by a Great Man, * *None deny there is a God but*

* Lord Bacon's Essay of Atheism.

those for whom it maketh that there were no God. For they know that if there be one, he will certainly judg them for their evil doings. They cannot therefore be secure in their sins unless the notion and remembrance of a Deity be blotted out. It is their supposed Interest then, not their Reason, that makes them deny a God; for it is their Concern to be perswaded, that there is none to punish them. Briefly, they are unwilling to believe any thing but what their Lust shall put into their Creed. Thus you see the true Reason of the Atheism of these times. It is fed and pamper'd by Luxury; the constant Fumes and Steams of this affect the Brain, and discompose the Intellect. Practical Atheism leads to that which is Dogmatical; i. e. holding and believing that there is no God. Evil and perverse minds, profane and debauch'd lives, strange-

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ly byas and incline men to this.
Wherefore if you would effectually
shut out this Vile Perswasion,
take care to suppress your Evil Affections
and Practices, for these are wont
to court mens understandings to turn
Atheists.

VII. Atheists take occasion from
our *Divisions, Broils, and Animosities*,
from the many *Parties* and *Squadrons*
of *Seets* that are in the World,
to bid defiance to all Religion;
and they resolve to profess none
till they can see them all Agreed.
Thus * *Tully* observed of old,
that the Dissentions of Philosophers,
the various Sentiments and Opinions
that prevail'd among them were a
cause of some mens denying a Deity,
at least of their staggering about it.
And truly this Observer himself,
in his Books *De Natura Deorum*,
is so given to the *Aca-*

* *De Nat. Deorum, Lib. 1.*

demical vein of Disputing, that he seems sometimes to be irresolv'd whether there is any God or no. So it hath been among some of those who have taken upon them the external Denomination of *Christians*. The Differences in Opinion, the Errors and Heresies which they take notice of, cause them to suspect yea to renounce all Truth. A great deal of the Atheism of this present Age may be ascrib'd to this. Some behold the great Scufflings that are about Religion, not only the Single Combates, but the Pitch'd Battels that are about it, and thereupon they discard all thoughts of any such thing, and become perfect Libertines. And herein they are promoted and push'd on by such persons as the Author of *Fiat Lux* and the *Treatise of Humane Reason*, who both design *Scepticism*, and so *Atheism*.

But though it is thus, though the Different Perswasions about Religious Matters have this ill effect, yet this can be no true Reason why any man should renounce the Belief of a God. For he that is truly rational and considerate, will rather make this an Argument of the contrary: for it was foretold by * Christ and his † Apostles, that Errors and Delusions should be in the World, and therefore the *Fulfilling* of these Prophecies be as witness not only to the Truth of the Writings of the New Testament, and consequently of Christianity, but of the Divinity it self. For things of this nature, which depend wholly on free and arbitrary Causes, cannot be foretold without Divine and Supernatural help. None but an All-seeing eye could have a prospect of

* Mat. 24. 16. Luke 17. 1. † 1 Tim. 4. 1. 2 Tim. 3. 3, 6. 3 Pet. 3. 3. Jude 18.

these future Occurrences. The Predicting of such things to come is an Evidence of an Omniscient Deity.

And then as to the thing it self, why should any man think it Strange and Unaccountable that there are *Dissentions* in Christendom? He may as well wonder that there are *Men* in the World; for as long as these retain their nature, *i. e.* are subject to Prejudice, Love of Interest, Passion, Pride, and the like, there will be *Errors* and *Heresies*, for these proceed from some of those ill Principles: and unless God should change the frame of the World, and destroy the freedom of Man's will, *i. e.* make him another Creature, it cannot be otherwise. How unreasonably then do men question a God, and cry out against Religion it self because they see so many of this sort of Disorders

ders in the world? Whereas it is certain, that it is not the fault of Religion that things are thus, but they are thus because men have so little Religion.

Again, the Cheats and Delusions that are in the world are useful for the *Trial* of Mankind, *that* (as the Apostle saith) *they who are approved may be made manifest*, 1 Cor. 11. 19. I do not say they were *design'd* for this (for no Evil is *design'd* by God) yet it is certain they are expedient for this purpose; and there is no better way to have an experiment of the Upright Judgment, Sincerity, Faithfulness, and Constancy of Persons, than by their being expos'd to these Impostures. Lastly, God deservedly *Punishes* men with erroneous and false Doctrines. 2 *Thess.* 2. 10, 11. *Because they receive not the love of the truth* (yea because they hate it, and oppose themselves

to

to it) and have pleasure in unrighteousness, for this cause he sends them strong delusion, that they shall believe a Lye, and that they shall defend and maintain it. It is just with God to leave men to the Error and Blindness of their Minds, and judicially to give them over to Atheistical Perswasions when they have wilfully debauch'd and abused their Faculties. This is the dreadful, but just Judgment of God ; and I doubt not but the present *Atheism* of this Age is such.

Thus it is evident that Errors and Dissentions about Religion are so far from being Arguments of the Non-Existence of a Deity, that they are undeniable Proofs of it. Let not then the diversity of Sects and the Disputes of wrangling Heads (as particularly the late upstart Contrast between the *Unitarians* and *Trinitarians*) prejudice us
against

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against our Christian Faith. But
let us rather be stirr'd up hence to
hold fast the Principles of our Be-
lief, and to own a Deity when there
are so many in this degenerate Age
that deny it. And withal, let us
endeavour to banish *Atheism* by do-
ing so to our *Divisions*: let us lay
aside our Religious Squabbles, and
arrive at last to a happy Agreement
in Doctrine, that we may hereby
cut off occasion of Atheistick Un-
belief on this Account. However,
though in some Points we can't
fully accord, let us not be hot and
firy against one another, as if Cha-
rity were no Virtue with us.

VIII. There is something more
heinous than *Divisions*, which fre-
quently occasions *Atheism*, and
confirms men in it; and that is,
the *Hypocrisie* and *Evil Practices* of
too many that make a very fair professi-
on of Christianity. Whilst it is ob-
serv'd

serv'd that they talk Religiously, and pretend to Holiness, but do nothing of what they talk of or pretend to; whilst it is seen that they have a *form of godliness*, but deny the power thereof; whilst it is evident that they cry *the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord*, and yet are unhallowed in their Lives; whilst it is known that they lay claim to the Spirit, but are Carnal and Sensual in their Manners, and enterprize very vile things for their worldly Profit and Advantage; in short, whilst it is observ'd that the Behaviour of fundry of the avowed Professors of Christianity is unanswerable to their Principles, there is a sort of men that for the sake of these, presently conclude all to be Hypocrites, and Christianity it self to be an Imposture. This then I grant, that the Unbecoming Lives of Christians are an *unhappy occasion* of

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of Atheism sometimes, but they
can never be alledged as a *sufficient*
one. For what though there be
mere Pretenders to *Godlineſſ*? doth
it thence follow that there is none
at all? What though there are
great numbers of Religious Impo-
ſtors? Muſt I therefore thence con-
clude that all Profeſſors of Religi-
on are an errant Cheat? Then by
the ſame Logick I may perempto-
rily infer, that there is no ſuch Me-
tal as *Silver*, becauſe by too noted
experience we find at this day that
it is generally counterfeited; and
there is no ſuch thing as True
Coin, becauſe ſo much is adultera-
ted amongſt us. No man of ſenſe
will make theſe Concluſions: and
'tis as certain, that he can with as
little reaſon make the others. Let
us not then be abuſed by unſound
and fallacious Inferences: let us
not think there is no Religion be-
cauſe

cause there are so many Unworthy Retainers to it. Yea, let us be fully convinced of this, that though Christianity hath been, and is to this day abused and sophisticated, and thereby dishonoured; yet it is a Reality, and we may venture our Lives upon it. And seeing the Evil Deportment of some that profess Christianity is the greatest encouragement to Atheism and Vice, let us all make it our great business to adorn our Profession with a holy, strict, and exemplary Conversation. Let our *light so shine before men, that others seeing our good works* may be so far from denying, that *they may glorifie God.* And let us pray for the arrival of that Happy Day (and I hope it is not very far off) when Religion shall universally bear sway upon Earth, and when men shall be thoroughly convinced of the real Worth of Christianity

Christianity from the Practices of those that profess it.

IX. In the next place, more particularly, the *Ill Examples* of some who by their Office are *Spiritual Guides and Instructors*, are mention'd as another great occasion of Irreligion and Atheism. It is necessary to take notice of this, because it is alledged (but very frequently without ground) by the sworn Patrons of that Cause which I am now pleading against. They observe of some of this Order of men, that they urge Virtue and Holiness with great Warmth and pathetick Zeal, and yet are very cold, yea wholly neglectful in the Practice of them, and visibly favour those Vices and Enormities which they dissuade others from: whence it is no wonder (say they) that these Persons are not believed to be in good earnest, yea that they
are

are thought not to believe themselves, *i. e.* to be really perswaded that those things are true which they discourse of; for it is seen, that their Lives wholly contradict their Doctrine. Whence this rash Conclusion is made, that Preaching is a meer Trade, that the Ministerial Function is a Cheat, and that Religion it self is so too, and that a Deity is no other. Thus where is there more of *Atheism* than in *Italy*, the Pope's own Soil, part of which is call'd *Holy Land*. Which the Observing * Author of *Europæ Speculum* (who had convers'd in his Travels with the *Italians*, and knew them very well) attributes to the gross Wickedness of the *Roman Clergy*, and particularly of the Popes and Cardinals, of whose scandalous Speeches and Actions the people of that Country have a greater

* Sir Edwyn Sandys.

know-

knowledge than others. They are not ignorant that several Popes were inclined to be Atheists; as *Paul 3.* when he was dying told the Standards by, that he should now know three things; viz. whether the Soul be immortal, whether there be a Hell, and whether there be a God. And *John 23.* (as is plain from that Council of *Constance* by whom he was deposed) profess'd that he look'd upon Religion as a Fable, and God and the Soul's Immortality as such. And they dayly behold the lewd and dissolute Practiees of some of the Cardinals and Prelates, Abbots, Monks, and of their Parish-Priests, which very thing (as the foresaid Author observes) makes them the most Irreligious People in the World, yea causes them to defie *all Religion* for their sakes. Especially they conclude, that there is nothing true and real in *Christianity,*

anity, because so many of the eminent Pretenders to it and Assertors of it, live continually in opposition to all Religious Principles and Practices, and are seen to be guilty of the most horrid Impieties, of the most execrable Villanies that are to be imagined. Their being so near to the *Head of that Religion* (as he is stiled) makes them averse to the whole kind. And this is *in some measure* the case of People in other Countreys, where even the *Protestant* Faith is professed, but is accompanied with the Scandalous Lives and Lewd Practices of some that are immediately concern'd in Holy things, and whose Employment it is to direct others in Religion.

But to speak impartially to any considerate Person, this cannot yield an occasion of being *Atheistical*: for though the manners of *some* of the

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Sacred Function be offensive, yet 'tis irrational and absurd to blast all Religion for their Misdemeanours. We do not read that our Saviour condemned the *Jewish Church* and *Mosaick Law* because of the Hypocrisie and Wickedness of the Chief Priests, Scribes, and Doctors of the Law. Nay, he tells the People, *All that they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works*, Matth. 23. 3. As much as if he had said, The Moral Law, and all the Offices of Religion, are not in the least discredited by the vicious Manners of some of your Teachers. Be careful that you imitate them not in their Practices; but be very observant of the Holy Doctrine which they deliver; entertain no ill Thoughts of it, because of the corrupt Lives of your Guides. The like may be said now; the Faults and Miscarriages

riages of any Ecclesiastical Persons must not be charged on the Sacred Institution of Christ ; we ought not to think ill of Christianity for the disorderly Behaviour of any spiritual Officers in the Church. We see that there is no man refuses to follow a Learned Physician's Prescriptions and Rules concerning Health, because he doth not observe them himself. Nor can the Spiritual Patient with any reason reject the Rules of Saving Health and Happiness, though they are not observ'd by the Prescriber himself.

But to be yet more plain with the Persons I am now dealing with, *they* (of all men) cannot with any tolerable pretence make use of this Plea : they cannot complain of the Lives of the Clergy as administering to their disregard of Religion, for the more strict and religious any Church-man is, the more is he de-

spised and hated by them. A Pious Clergy-man is reckon'd by them a weak shallow Creature, a fantastick Bigot, and is laugh'd at as such. So that it is evident, that what they alledge concerning the undue Behaviour of some that serve at the Altar, is a more groundless Cavil; for they would have all men as Wicked and Debauch'd as themselves.

It must indeed be acknowledged, that this is a great Scandal, and of very pernicious consequence, and such as is not to be permitted with impunity in the Church: but it is no excusable ground of Impiety and Atheism. However, since it is so heinous in it self, and is made by the perverse minds of many an Excuse for their Atheism, it is the concern of all Christian Guides of Souls to be Examples to the Flock, to conform their Lives with great Circum-

cumspection and Exactness to the Laws of Christ Jesus their Master, and to take care to perform themselves whatever they require others to do.

X. Unbelief of a God is occasion'd sometimes by the *Strange Revolutions and Changes, the Odd Events, and Unaccountable Administrations* that are in the World. Especially men are inclined to question God's Existence as well as his Providence when they behold the prosperous state of the most vicious Persons, and on the contrary, observe how miserably sometimes the Best men are treated in this Life, and at Death are not at all differenc'd from the Worst, but perish alike. Then you shall hear one cry out, *Quis putet esse Deos?* And another uses the like Language of the Poet,

Dum rapiant mala fata bonos,---

Sollicitor nullos esse putare Deos.

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But

But any understanding man, who will take time to consider and deliberate, will see that nothing of this nature can justly administer matter of Atheism. For it must be remembered, that we are finite shallow Creatures, and are not able to comprehend the Wise Designs and Purposes of Heaven in every Event that we see: and therefore when we meet with obscure and rugged Dispensations, and such as seem to be very disorder'd and irregular, we have no reason to find fault with them, and to think them unworthy of God, and of Divine Providence, because we are not able to make a judgment of them. Those Events which seem to be excentrick and at random, are guided by a steady unerring hand: but we have not depth of Apprehension to conceive it at present. But it may be afterwards, when our minds are more enlightened,

ned, we shall know how to solve these difficult *Phænomena*. However, at the last Day all these Intrigues, these Knots, these Labyrinths, these Riddles, shall be fully resolved ; and it shall be part of our employment in the other world, to admire and adore the Infinite Wisdom of God in the disposal of the Affairs here on Earth. And particularly we shall then be satisfied, yea we may be now, concerning the foresaid Problem, *viz.* the Prosperity of the *Wicked*, and the contrary Circumstances of the *Good* ; for 'tis evident, that these are according to exact Justice and Wisdom. God intended the former should *have their portion in this life only* ; and he designed the latter to be prepared for Heaven by those rougher dealings here below.

Lastly, *Learned Times*, especially if accompanied with *Peace* or

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rity, are reckon'd by a * Judicious
Person as another Cause of Atheism.
Nor is this inconsistent with what
I said before, that *Ignorance* is the
Mother of *Atheism*. For Learned
or Peaceable times are only thus
far conducive to this Great Evil,
that men are then generally too In-
quisitive and Curious, too Nice
and Wanton, and over-busily pry
into Secrets ; which when they
cannot satisfy themselves about,
they are inclined to be Atheistical,
and to doubt even concerning the
chief things of Religion. Where-
fore I question not but the starting
and keeping up at this day the De-
bates about the Doctrine of the *Ho-
ly Trinity* are a great advancement
to this evil disposition of mind.
There are those who push on both
Parties to wrangle and quarrel a-
bout this Grand Point, and in the

* Lord Bacon's Essays.

mean time laugh at the Combata-
nts on both sides. Whilst they
encourage some Writers to baffle
the *Trinity of Divine Persons*, their
Project is to destroy the *Essence it
self*. Whilst they put them upon
maintaining the Unity of the God-
head, they hope in the close of the
Dispute to introduce a Nullity not
only of the Deity, but of all Re-
ligion. For by these Bandyings
backward and forward, they know
that mens minds will be unsettled
and that they will be apt to waver
about the truth and certainty of the
main Articles of our Religion.
When Persons observe, that the
very Divinity of our Blessed Lord
and Saviour is tofs'd and torn by
rude Fens; when they see so *Catho-
lick* a Doctrine attack'd with such
Violence; what can they think of
the other great Verities of Christi-
anity? And withall, the *Anti-Tri-
nitarians*

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nitarians hereby provoke some of their *Adversaries* to an indecent sort of Language concerning these Holy Mysteries: so that some of these latter have hurt the Cause it may be almost as much by their Defending it, as the others have by their Opposing it. Thus it must needs be when Persons immoderately indulge *Curiosity* in these Abstruse and Sublime Matters, and will not be content with what the *Bible* and *immediate Inferences* drawn thence suggest to us. By this means they lose their hold, and give their Antagonists a clear Advantage against them, and manifestly promote the Design of those who make it their work to make void the Notion of a Deity.

Nay, in the very *Socinian* Doctrine it self there seems to be an *Atheistick* Tang. Would not a man guess that there is an approach to
Atheism

Atheism in those Reflections which are made on a Sermon preach'd by the Right Reverend Bishop of *Worcester*, * where one of the most receiv'd Notions concerning the Nature of the Deity it self is cashier'd.

The *Self-Existence* of God, which is the Primary, Fundamental, and Essential Property, and is the very Life and Soul of the explicatory part of the Doctrine of the Deity, is peremptorily pronounced by them to be a *Contradiction*. It is well known, *Socinus*, and *Crellius*, and others of this Party, deny God's *Immensity*, i. e. his being present every where as to his Essence and Nature. All of them agree, that he hath not a Knowledge and Foresight of every thing that happens in the World, for future Contingencies are hid from him. Particularly

* Considerations on the Explications of the Doctrine of the Trinity, Page 5, 6, 7.

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* *Socinus* largely argues against this *Prescience*, and tells us, that he is to be laugh'd at that asserts the contrary. Nay, it is farther observable, that this great Patriarch of the present Cause disowns the *Immaterial* or *Spiritual Nature* of God, as may be undeniably gather'd from his † Exposition of *John 4. 24.* and other Passages in his Writings. And he is followed by *Crellius*, as is manifest from that Account which this latter gives of a *Spirit*, when || he speaks of the Nature of God. He doth not make it to be any thing above a *refined body*, a *substance void of all gross matter*, such as the Air or *Æther* is. So that when these men call God a *Spirit*, their meaning is, that he is a Fine and Te-

* *Prælect. cap. 8, 9, 10, 11.* † *Fragment. Disp. de Adorat. Christi.* || *Deus est Spiritus æternus: spiritum autem cum nominamus, substantiam intelligimus ab omni crassitie, qualem in corporibus oculorum arbitrio subjectis cernimus, alienam. Hoc sensu Angelos dicimus Spiritus, & Aerem, &c. De Deo & Attrib. cap. 15.*

nuious sort of Matter, not that he is wholly Incorporeal, and altogether free from Matter. This is the same with Mr. *Hobbs's* Corporeal God. Thus four of the Chief Attributes of the Deity, viz. *Self-Existence, Omnipresence, Omniscience, and Spirituality*, are either in whole or in part rejected. Whereupon, I ask this Question, Whether these things do not discover a Tendency (to say no more) in the *Anti-Trinitarians* to that which I am charging them with? For to assert a God; and yet to deny some of his Choicest Properties (whereby we know him to be God) is in effect the same with denying a Deity.

If they distinguish between the *English* and *Foreign Socinians* (as I perceive they do) and tell us that the former do not assert the things before mention'd, I answer, the very *English Prints* avouch the first
of

of those Particulars: and as for the rest, they being the Doctrine of the *Chief Patrons* of the Socinian Cause, yea and of the *Most* of them, the English Unitarians are involved in them, because those Foreigners are the greatest and most substantial part of that Body of men call'd *Socinians*. Thus the *Trinitarian Scheme of Religion*, drawn up by some English Socinians of late is thought by them to touch all the Trinitarians (else it could not be stiled the *Trinitarian Scheme*) though every individual Trinitarian doth not hold all those things mentioned there. Let them apply this, and they will have nothing to object.

And further, I would argue from their own avowed Principle, which is that *they are to admit of nothing but what is exactly adjusted to Nature's and Reason's Light, nothing but what is entirely clear and evident:*
for

for though it is true some Socinian Writers of late have laid aside this Notion (and truly we may observe that they are shifting every day their Arguments, and so we know not where to have them) yet he that is acquainted with the Writings that make up the main Body of Socinianism knows full well that this is a Principle constantly asserted and maintain'd by the generality of them, and upon all occasions insist-ed upon. This hath been the Stanch Notion of the Great Dons of the Party, and of the famous *Socinus* himself. And *Slicktingius*, though he seems indeed sometimes to be otherwise perswaded, yet comes to this at last, that the *Trinity* is a Doctrine that *can't be borne*, because *it can't be understood*. And why do * *Crellius* and others argue from Rea-

* Comment. Vol. I. page 118. * De Uno Deo P. lib. 2. sect. 1, 2.

son and Logical Arguments against the Trinity, if they do not refuse the Doctrine upon the account of Reason? And it is certain they would not do this if they were not persuaded that these things in Religion must be adjusted to Natural Reason, and that they are displeased with the Doctrine of the *Trinity* and *Incarnation*, &c. because these are not exactly squared to their Natural Notions. You see then what is the sentiment of the Greatest Rabbies of this way, and therefore we must make our estimate of the Socinian or Antitrinitarian Doctrine from these, and not from one or two Modern Writers. This I think will be granted by all men of reason.

But what if it doth appear that even the very *English* and *Modern Socinians*, though they seem to wave this Principle, do yet retain it, and govern

govern themselves by it? Else why do they complain that * *they have no conception of the Trinity* as the Trinitarians represent it to them, *they cannot form an idea of it; it is a notion that excites no ideas in their minds; it is against Reason and Natural Light?* We are advised by the Modern Penmen † to consult our Reason about the thing in question; and if we do so, we shall find an absolute impossibility in the Trinitarian Doctrine: our Reason will assure us that an Almighty Father and an Almighty Son are most certainly two Gods, and that two Creators can be no other than two Gods: therefore we may, and we must infer that the explication of the first Verses of St. John's Gospel, which advances such a Doctrine, is certainly false. Again, the English Socinians tell us that || *the*

* Letter of Resolution concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity. The Unreasonableness of the Doctrine of the Trinity. † An Accurate Examination of the Principal Texts, &c. chap. 5. || Observations on the Answer to the brief History of the Unitarians, chap. 2.

*Doctrine of the Trinity clashing altogether with our natural ideas can be no matter of Revelation, and therefore ought not to be believ'd. And hear their Final and Resolute Determination, which fully speaks their absolute adherence to this Principle, † We abide by this Argument, here we fix our foot, never to be removed, that the inconsistency of the Trinity (as well as the Incarnation) with Reason and Natural Knowledge being undeniably evident, therefore this Doctrine can have no real foundation in Divine Revelation, that is to say, in Holy Scripture. And we find that our English Unitarians * argue from Reason in this Point, and they declare that they cannot believe it because Reason doth not teach it. Thus we find that the bottom of all is, the Trinity and such like Doctrines are*

† Letter of Resolution concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity. * Observations on the Answer to the brief History of the Unitarians, chap. i.

above their Reason, and Natural Idea's, and therefore they are no matter of their Faith. This is it which the Reverend Person before named charges these men with in a great part of his

* Sermon : and certainly he would not

* Of the Mysteries of the Christian Faith.

have done it if there were no such persons in being. It is too plain that there are such, and I think I have proved it from their own mouths. The sum of their Opinion and resolution is this, that there is nothing difficult and abstruse in Religion, and that they will not believe any thing in Christianity but what they can make out by Reason : otherwise it must be discarded presently.

Now, to apply this Principle of the Antitrinitarians ; we are assured that *we cannot by searching find out God, Job 11. 7. his Infinite Nature*

74 *Some Thoughts concerning*
and *Immense Essence* are not com-
mensurate to our Conceptions, are
not adjusted to our Idea's, but are
far above them: it is impossible
that the Apprehensions of finite
Creatures should reach these things:
therefore according to the foresaid
Principle, the *Unitarians* are not
obliged to believe any such things;
they must not admit of the Infinite
Nature of God, concerning which
our Conceptions will always be ob-
scure and unproportionate; yea,
they cannot but infer from their
own Maxim, that *God* is an impos-
sible Being, at least that His *Im-
mense Nature* is such. They cannot
comprehend and conceive the Man-
ner of the Immense and Infinite
Presence or Knowledge of God;
therefore they must disown the
things themselves. Thus by vertue
of their own profess'd Principle,
the *Godhead* it self as well as the
Trinity

Trinity is shock'd by them: and consequently one would be apt to gather that a *Socinian*, so far as he is led by this Principle, is an *Atheist*, or (lest that should seem harsh) one that favours the Cause of *Atheism*. For he may as well quit the belief of a *God* because of these Difficulties and Abstrusities in the Nature of *God*, as renounce the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, because there are some inexplicable and unintelligible things that accompany it. But because all men do not follow the natural Conduct of their Principles (the Divine Providence over-ruling in these cases) I do not here pass an Universal Censure, I do not speak of every individual man, nay I hope charitably concerning most of them. However, it is to be fear'd, that some are unhappily under the force and sway of the foregoing Principle ; and

76 *Some Thoughts concerning*
these are the Persons I speak of,
and no other.

These things I freely and openly
suggest. Which the Learned and
Ingenious Gentlemen of the *Raco-*
pian Perswasion cannot dislike, un-
less they disapprove of themselves,
unless they disclaim their own Wri-
tings; for they cry up in almost all
of them (and in * one very lately)
a Freedom of Discourse, a Liberty
of speaking their Thoughts, which
they applaud as a very *Generous* and
Noble thing, and much value them-
selves upon it. They cannot deny
that to me which they allow of and
magnifie in themselves, especially
when I most sacredly profess to
them that I have sincerely delivered
my Thoughts, and spoken what I
conceive to be the words of Truth
and Soberness. Wherefore I ex-
pect to be approved of by Persons

* An Exhortation to a Free and Impartial Enquiry, &c.
of

of their Ingenuity and Free Temper, who (as I find) blame others (even some of the Clergy) for palliating and dissembling, and not speaking out. I think they will not charge me with this Fault, for I have acted according to their own Generous Principles: and I must tell them there is not a Friend of theirs in all their dear *Eleutheropolis* that is more disingaged and unbiass'd than I am.

But though I have used a becoming Freedom, yet there are some things that I omit, because I would let the World see that I am not eager and lavish in blaming and censuring any Party of Men, especially since it is suggested to me by some that are Learned and Sober of that Perswasion, that it is hard that their Opinion should suffer for the *Ill Consequences* of it, or for the *Insincerity* of any that profess it, or

by reason of the *Rash indiscreet Passages* which occur in some of their late Writers. I do it likewise because I would give the World an Example of Moderation and Temper in this Disputing and Wrangling Age ; that it may be seen, that whilst I remonstrate against the Errors and Mistakes (as I suppose them to be) of any Side, I can forbear to publish the Aggravations of them, and that I had rather the Truth should prevail than the Contrary Opinion, or the Maintainers of it should be exposed. Finally, I consider that it is improper and unseasonable to contend among our selves at home whilst our Armies are engaging the Enemy abroad.

The Proper Antidote belonging to this Head of my Discourse is this ; Let us make a Difference between *Finite* Beings and that which
is

is *Infinite* : for seeing there is such a Vast Difference between them, we ought to observe it. We cannot form the same Conceptions of one and the other ; yea the latter is exalted above our reach and comprehension ; wherefore let us be satisfied, that the Properties of an Infinite Being (such as *God* is) are incomprehensible, and therefore that may be possible in the Infinite Nature of God (as namely that it is communicable to Three Distinct Persons) which is impossible in the Finite Nature of Man or other Creatures. Let us attend to that which may be known, and that clearly and distinctly, and not trouble our thoughts and wrack our brains about Unsearchable Mysteries. A Lover of Peace as well as Truth should not be so much solicitous about the *Manner of the Three Personalities or Subsistencies* as about the
the

80 *Some Thoughts concerning*
the Trinity it self. We are sure of
the latter, as sure as the Scripture
can make us; therefore it doth not
become us to wrangle about the
former; especially when we find
that ill-minded men make use of
this Quarrel to promote the Cause
of Atheism; and truly they make
advances towards it every day.

I proceed to Other Doctrines
which administer to this Great
Evil which I have been speaking of,
and which may justly be reckoned
among the Blemishes of these In-
quisitive Times. Such is that of a
* late Writer, that the Books of the
Old Testament were not written
by those Persons whose Names they
bear, that the Historical parts of
the Bible are lame and imperfect,
and repugnant to themselves; that
the Writings were not carefully
and faithfully transmitted to us, but

* *Spinoza. Tract. Theol. Polit. cap. 8, 9, 10.*

abound

abound with many faults and mistakes, that the Books of the *Prophets* are mere scraps and fragments, and taken without order and method from other Writings. All which put together, destroys the Authority of Divine Revelation, and consequently of all Reveal'd Religion, from whence we have the strongest and most pregnant Arguments for a Deity.

Again, The same Design is advanced in these *Learned Times* by thrusting of Opinions and *Theories* on the world in defiance of the plain *Letter* and *Historical Part* of the Bible: as if the Sacred History, which was written by Inspired Men, were not as credible and authentick as that of Prophane Authors. The frame of the *Primitive Earth* is represented opposite to what *Moses* tells us it was: the account which he gives of *Paradise*
as

82 *Some Thoughts concerning*
(as it is a Particular Place) is
contradicted, yea it is strongly a-
verr'd, that there never was any
such thing. What *Moses* relates
concerning our *First Parents* is
laugh'd at as a Romantick Story.
The *Universal Deluge* in *Noah's* time
is attributed to an accidental diru-
ption of the Earth; which when
scann'd, is found to be fictitious
and imaginary, and thence the De-
luge it self is concluded by many
to be so; and *Moses* is reckon'd by
them as an Impostor. Which is
taken notice of, and thus animad-
verted upon by a Curious Observer,
and One who (as becometh so
Learned an Head) joyns Religion
with his Philosophical Researches,
* *The Atbeistical Party* had hereby an
occasion (saith he) boldly to give out
that such a Deluge as that described
by *Moses* was altogether incredible,

* Dr. Woodward's Hist. of the Earth, Part 3. 161.

and that there never was, nor could be any such thing. Nothing was talk'd of among them under Mathematical Demonstrations of the falshood of it, which they vented with all imaginable Triumph, and would needs have it that they had here sprung a fresh and unanswerable Argument against the Authentickness of the Mosaick Writings; which is indeed what they drive at, and a Point they very fain would gain. For if the Pen-man of the first book in the Bible be found tripping, then the Credit of all the rest falls to the ground; we may justly question their Fidelity, yea deny whatever they say. And so the Bible falls, and with it all our Religion, and with that necessarily a Deity, which is the thing ultimately aimed at, I do not say by the first Hand from whence these Notions came (for I charitably hope better things of so Learned a Person, especially since
he

84 *Some Thoughts concerning*

he hath shew'd himself not unwilling to retract them) but by those ill-minded men who make their Markets of these Opinions. All that I will add here is this, that if (according to a Learned * Doctor of the Sorbon) *it be a very dangerous Paradox to presume to deny that the Pentateuch was composed by Moses,* and accordingly Hobbes and Spinoza are condemn'd by him for using Arguments to that purpose, then surely it must be much more dangerous and pernicious to hold that any part of *Moses's* Writings is mere Forgery and Fiction, *i. e.* was designed only to comply with the Ignorant *Jews* at that time, and doth not contain matter of fact. I have said something of this nature in another place, and on another account, but I never had occasion before to represent it as an unhappy Handle

* *Du-Pin Hist. of Eccles. Writers. Prelim. Dissertat.*

which

which Atheistically disposed Persons may lay hold upon. Wherefore let those who are Philosophically disposed take warning hence, and forbear to prefer their own precarious Hypotheses before the plain Account which this Inspired Historian gives of those first things in the World. Let none presume to represent the Writings of this First Author as false, in order to make their own true, and thereby to gratifie the worst sort of men. I need not say more here, because I have already antidoted against the Infection of these two last Heads, viz. in those Discourses wherein I have treated of the *Authority and Perfection of the Scriptures.*

In the next place, Learned Enquirers are apt to give Encouragement to Atheism by an *obstinate endeavouring to solve all the Phænomena in the world by mere Natural and*
Cor-

86 *Some Thoughts concerning*

Corporeal Causes, and by their averfeness to admit of the aid and concurrence of a Supernatural or Immaterial Principle for the production of them. The *Mechanick Philosophy* hath done a great deal of mischief on this account: not but that (so far as it ought to be made use of) it is generally the most excellent (because the most plain and sensible) way of displaying the Operations of Natural Bodies: and it cannot be denied, that since This hath been revived and entertain'd, there hath been that Improvement in Natural Philosophy which never was thought of before, and which could never have been attain'd by the *Aristotelian* way: yet this is to be said with truth and reason, that the Great Reviver and Manager of it hath carried it on too far by undertaking to give an account of All Effects and Events in the production

ction of Vegetables and Animals, and in the very Formation and Organization of the Body of Man himself by mere Mechanick Principles, thereby in a manner ascribing Divinity to Matter and Motion. This Great Philosophick Wit over-shot himself here: and though it is true he hath otherways (*viz.* by asserting the Notion of *Souls* or *Spirits*, and by demonstrating the essential and real Difference from Bodies) made some part of amends for this, yet there are many at this day who make very ill use of this Doctrine. Some take occasion thence to believe, that Men as well as Brutes are no other than Engines and Machines, mere Neurospasts and Senseless Puppets. Others build upon this Notion the Conceit of *Thinking Matter*, for if *Pores* and *Particles* do all things in the
G Bodies

Bodies of Brutes, it is probable they serve instead of *Souls* to those of Humane Race: and so a Spiritual and Immaterial Principle is excluded. This *Philosophy* is *Vain Deceit*, and too many are *spoil'd* by it.

But they should consider that the Noble French Philosopher himself did not believe all that he wrote. *Malebranch*, who was a great Admirer and Defender of him, tells us, that *he never pretended that things were made in that manner that he describes them* *. Yea, we have *Des Cartes's* own word for it, † *I require not any one, saith he, to believe that Bodies which compose this visible World were ever produced in that way which I have represented them.* It seems by his own Con-

* Search after Truth, Book 1.
Part 4.

† Princip. Philos.

fession,

feſſion, that he was not in good earneſt in all the parts of his Philoſophy, and therefore we may gather that in ſome of the Particulars aforemention'd he only propounded his Conjectures.

We might carry this Thought yet farther, and obſerve that the generality of the Modern Philoſophers (not only *Carteſians*, but others) have contributed much to Atheiſm, by referring All things, not only in Organiz'd Bodies but in every part of the World, and all the *Phænomena* that we take notice of in it to a *Corporeal Principle*, and to the Efficiency and Power of this alone. Whereas, it is certain that there are many things which happen in the World that cannot be ſolv'd any other way than by the Superintendence of a *Spiritual Being*. There are ſeveral wonderful

90 *Some Thoughts concerning*
Occurrences which no man can
give an account of, but by suppo-
sing an Almighty Immaterial Agent,
which is no other than God. Thus
we must be constrained to repair
to an Incorporeal Principle to solve
the Cause of the *Seas constant Ebb-*
ing and Flowing, and the *Attraction*
of the Loadstone, and the *Hanging of*
the Clouds, and many other *Phænomena*
in Nature: for the Accounts
that are given are imperfect and in-
consistent, and do no ways satisfy
any Serious Enquirer. A man that
is not willing to be put off with
flight and insufficient Suggestions,
cannot rest in them as true Causes
of those things. Only Philosophi-
cal men will be assigning some
Reasons of things, whether they
can or no: and this is an Inclinati-
on which is incident to the best
and wisest Naturalists in all Ages.
But

But they may as reasonably undertake to shew whence it is that the Sun hath its continual Motion from East to West, or (as they would rather express it) why the Earth wheels about upon its Axis from West to East: which yet I do not see attempted by any Philosopher whatsoever; and yet there is as much reason for the one as the other.

So for *Gravity*, that known affection of Bodies whereby they are inclined towards the same Common Center, it seems not to be solved by any Principles of *Mechanism* that have hitherto been propounded, whether it be from a kind of *Magnetism* in some parts of the *Earth* (as hath been imagin'd by some) or from the reflected Particles of the *Celestial Matter* driving down into their places the ear-

thy bodies they find above them, or (as they at other times are pleased to speak) from the *pressure of the Atmosphere*, which moves all Bodies continually downwards, because it doth it self press always towards the Earth: or whether it be (as the Learned *Isaac Vossius* holds) from the *Diurnal Motion of the Earth*, whereby all heavy Bodies (which move with greater difficulty than light ones) tend to the middle or Center, and light Bodies are expelled towards the Superficies or from the Center. But a man that would be very serious in Philosophizing, can hardly acquiesce in any of these Solutions. He is not hereby satisfied how *Non-gravitation* can be and not be in a thing at the same time, as in Water in the Sea or in a River: for it is heavy and presses down, and yet the parts do not gravitate;
for

for 'tis known that those that dive, and are under so great a heap of Waters, yet feel it not upon them. Here must be *Θεός ὁ μυχάνης*, there must be acknowledged an other Cause besides those before mention'd (if they may be said to be *Causes* at all).

And accordingly I find that some of the most Judicious Philosophers of our own Nation have averr'd that a God, a Divine Incorporeal Substance may be evinced from the *Phænomena* of *Gravity*. This is made good by strong and nervous Arguments in an * Undertaking of the Learned Dr. *More*. † Another Ripe-witted Naturalist positively determines, that *the common Phænomenon of Gravity is impossible to be explain'd by any natural operation of*

* Enchirid. Metaphys. Cap. 11. † Mr. *Lack* concerning Education.

Matter, or any other law of Motion but the positive Will of a Superiour Being, so ordering it. And there is lately risen in our Horizon another Bright Philosophick Luminary, from whom we may expect Great Discoveries: it is his frank Acknowledgment that this wonderful Property of Bodies, whereby the World is tied and link'd together, and all things in it are kept from running back into their First Chaos and Confusion, and which consequently is necessary for the welfare, yea the very subsistence of the Universe, is supernatural. * *No power, saith he, of mere Nature can produce it: it surpasses all the Mechanism of Matter.* And in several other Instances which might be offer'd, there may be seen a despair of resolving the nature of them by material Causes wholly.

* *Dr. Woodward's Nat. Hist. of the Earth. Part 1.*

No meaner a Person than * Doctor *Lower* (who was voted by all the Faculty to be one of the most Accomplish'd *Anatomists* of this Age) imputes the wonderful *Motion of the Heart*, and the *Circulation of the Blood*, to a Divine and Supernatural Cause. He who was as well skill'd as any man in the Fabrick of the Parts and Vessels of the Body, and knew all the Springs of their Actions and Operations, was of opinion, that these could not be solv'd by any ordinary Principle. I mention this only to let the Reader see that some of the Bravest and Wisest Philosophers are forward to own a Divine Hand even in the Common Works of Nature. They do not think it below a Man of Philosophy to resolve some things into an Immaterial Principle. For

* *De Corde.*

96 *Some Thoughts concerning*
a Pious and Christian Philosopher
may plainly discern that there are
some things above the Efforts of
Matter and Motion.

It cannot be denied (whatever
some are pleas'd to say to the contra-
ry) that we live in as *Learned*
Times as ever have been extant. All
Arts and Sciences are improved even
to a Prodigy ; and particularly the
Accessions which are made to *Phi-*
losophy are very great and astonish-
ing. But yet I must needs concur
with that very Thoughtful and In-
genious Gentleman before cited,
who hath most truly told the
World, that * *without the notion and*
allowance of Spirits our Philosophy
will be lame and defective in one
main part of it, when it leaves out
the Contemplation of the most Excel-
lent and Powerful part of the Crea-

* Concerning Education.

tion, viz. those Immaterial Beings. And herein he follows all the Great and Renowned Philosophers of our Age, especially those of our own Country, as Dr. *More*, Sir *Matthew Hale*, Dr. *Willis*, Mr. *Boyle*, Mr. *Ray*, &c. who pretend not to solve all things in Philosophy by mere Natural Causes, who look not upon Man as a piece of Clockwork, but have frequent recourse to those Springs and Causes which are Spiritual and Incorporeal, and sometimes to the immediate hand of the Almighty Himself. To conclude then, let not the inestimable Blessing of Knowledge and Learning which is so peculiar to this Age, make us forgetful of the Grand Source and Spring of all operations and effects in Nature. Let us beware of those men who ascribe all the Phænomena in
the

the world to the power of the modified matter, and will leave nothing for God to do himself. Neither let us think that to Philosophize is to jar with the Sacred Writings, and to deny the very Natural History of it. The Scoffers at a Deity never had a more hopeful Harvest then since these Notions have prevail'd. By this means it comes to pass that *Philosophy*, which is the Study of Wisdom, affronts the Truest and Highest Wisdom; and even *Natural Philosophy*, which is one of the Choicest Accomplishments of humane minds, leads men even to the denial of the Author of Nature.

No wise man will disapprove of a Latitude either in *Philosophy*, or in the dubious and controverted Points of *Theology*: but then here he must be upon his guard, for
there

there are those that under the pretence of throwing off some precarious things in the Old Philosophy, and discarding the empty Speculations of the Schools cast off those Principles which are useful and sound: under the notion of the Advancements of Arts and Sciences, and the Improvement of the *belles lettres*, and carrying Learning up to a greater heighth, they in the mean time help to pull these down. Especially in Religion, under the colour of searching further than others have done into Divine matters they abandon some of the choicest Principles: under the pretext of Reason and Good Sense they obtrude any New Conceit upon the world, and regard not the suffrage of the Holy Scriptures or of the Primitive Church. This they call a *Rational Religion*, and if
you

you offer any thing against it, they cry it down as a *Dream*, a *Romance*, a *Fable*, a *Phantom*, an *Hobgoblin*, and (which is a word which they think comprehends all the rest) *Priest-craft*.

And here I might observe that among the Opinions which lead to Atheism, the denial of *Demons* and *Witches*, which * of late hath so much prevail'd, is none of the least. For besides that this is an open defiance to unquestionable History, Experience and matter of Fact, and so introduces the worst sort of Scepticism (which is the high-way to Atheism) it is evident that this supplants the belief of *Spiritual Beings* or *Substances* : for Witchcraft and all Diabolick Transactions are disbeliev'd on the ac-

* Mr. Hobbs Leviath. chap. 34. Mr. Websters Display of supposed Witchcraft. Dr. Becker's Enchanted World.

count of the improbability, if not impossibility of *Spirits*. So that it is plain the rejecting of the being and commerce of Dæmons or Infernal Spirits opens a door to the denial of the Deity, of which we can no otherwise conceive than that it is an *Eternal Spirit*.

There are *Other Doctrines* which advance Atheism, and may be reckon'd among the Dangerous Luxuries of these Inquisitive Times. Such is the vilifying of the *Hebrew Text* of the Old Testament, the proclaiming it to be faulty and erroneous, in order to establishing the *Seventy's Version* as only Authentick. Such is the building the Authority of the Books of the Old Testament on the pretended inspiration of certain *Publick Scribes* or *Notaries* among the *Jews*, in imitation of such among the *Egyptians*;
the

the avouching that the *Leaves* or *Volumes* on which these Books were wrote are misplaced and put out of order; the professed declaring that the *Canonical Books* are not the *same* that they were at first, but that several words and passages are left out. All mere Fiction and Conceit, unworthy of so Excellent a Genius as *F. S's*. Such also is the maintaining that the greatest part of the *Religious Rites* and *Constitutions* which God himself settled among the *Jews* were a Transcript of those that were in use among the *Idolatrous Pagan Nations*, and that the All-Wise Lawgiver borrow'd those immediately from these. The two former of these Attempts null the Authority of the Sacred Writings, and the last of them disparages not only them but the Blessed Founder of the Jewish

Oeco-

Oeconomy. I speak not this as if any of these Opinions can be thought to be True Reasons on which a man may ground his disesteem of the Scriptures, or of the Holy Doctrines contain'd in them, or of the Sacred Inditer of them; for they are the Sentiments but of a very few, and of those whose Learning, though it was exceeding great, had not wholly conquer'd their Prejudice, or freed them from Misapprehensions in some things. I cannot charge them with any direct design of favouring the Cause of Atheism, but ill-disposed men have made use of their Notions to that purpose. Wherefore, as we value the Reputation of our Religion, and the Honour of the Divine Author of it, let us be careful that we split not upon any of these *Rocks*, nor endanger our selves on any of the
H *Shallows*

Shallows before mention'd, and thereby make Shipwreck of our Faith and Holy Profession, or so endanger our selves that we can hardly be brought off again.

I might in the last place take notice of a Plausible Conceit which hath been growing up to a considerable time, and now hath the fortune to come to some maturity. Not to speak of its reception, (if not its birth) among some *Foreign Authors*, chiefly *Socinians*, it seem'd among our selves to be favour'd by that Learned, but Wavering, Prelate who writ the *Liberty of Prophesying*, and afterwards by another of his Order who compos'd * *The Naked Truth*. Lately it hath been revived by the Author of *the Naked Gospel*: and since more particularly fully and distinctly it hath been

* Chap. 1. Concerning the Articles of Faith.

maintain'd by the late Publisher of *the Reasonableness of Christianity, as deliver'd in the Scriptures.* He gives it us over and over again in these formal words, *viz. that nothing is required to be believed by any Christian man but this, that Jesus is the Messiah.* He contends that there is no other Article of Faith necessary to Salvation; this is a Full and Perfect Creed, and no person need concern himself in any other. This takes up about three quarters of his book, for he goes through the History of the *Evangelists* and the *Acts of the Apostles*, according to the order of Time (as he thinks) to give an account of this Proposition. But yet this Gentleman forgot, or rather wilfully omitted a plain and obvious passage in one of the *Evangelists*, *Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father,*

106 *Some Thoughts concerning*
and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,
Mat. 28. 19. From which it is plain,
that all Profelites to Christianity,
all that are adult Members of the
Christian Church, must be *taught*,
as well as baptized, into the Faith
of the *Holy Trinity*, Father, Son,
and Holy Ghost. And if they
must be *taught* this Doctrne (which
is the peremptory Charge and Com-
mission here given to the Apostles,
Go teach, &c.) then it is certain that
they must *believe* it, for this Teach-
ing is in order to Belief. This
will be denied by none, I suppose,
and consequently more is required
to be believed by Christian men,
and Members of Christ's Church,
than that *Jesus is the Messiah*. You
see it is part of the *Evangelical*
Faith, and such as is necessary, ab-
solutely necessary, to make one a
Member of the Christian Church,
to

to believe a Trinity in Unity in the Godhead ; or, in plainer terms, that though God is One as to his Essence and Nature, yet there are Three Persons in that Divine Essence, and that these Three Persons are really the One God : for we can't imagine that Men and Women should be required to be baptized into the Faith and Worship of any but the Only True God. This Epitomizer of the Evangelical Writings left out also that famous Testimony in *John 1. 1.* *In the beginning was the Word (Christ Jesus) and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* Whence we are obliged to yield assent to this Article, that *Christ is the word of God.* And there is added in Verse 14. another indispensable Point of Faith, viz. that the *word was made Flesh*, i. e. that God was Incarnate, the same with 1 *Tim.*

3. 16. *God manifest in the Flesh.* And it follows in the same Verse of this first Chapter of *St. John*, that this *Word* is the only begotten of the Father: whence we are bound to believe the *Eternal*, though ineffable, *Generation of the Son of God.*

Our Author likewise takes no notice that we are commanded to believe the Father and the Son, *Joh. 14. 10, 11.* and that the Son is in the Father, and the Father in the Son, which expresses their *Unity*. This is made an Article of Faith by our Saviour's particular and express Command. And other eminent parts of Christian Belief this Writer passes by, without having any regard to them, and yet pretends to present the World with a Compleat and Entire Account of all that is the matter of our Faith under the Gospel. This cannot but seem ve-

ry strange and unaccountable to any man of deliberate Thoughts, and who expects Sincerity from a Writer who makes some shew of it?

But this is not all; this Learned Gentleman, who with so much industry amasses together Quotations out of the *Gospels* and the *Acts of the Apostles*, yet is not pleas'd to proceed to the *Epistles*, and to give an Account of them as he did of the others; though the *Epistles* are as considerable a part of the *New Testament* as the *Gospels* and the *Acts*, and the Pen-men of them were equally inspired by the Holy Ghost. Can there be any Reason given of this partial dealing? Yes, it is most evident to any thinking and considerate person that he purposely omits the *Epistolary Writings* of the Apostles because they are fraught

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with Other Fundamental Doctrines
besides that One which he mentions. There we are instructed concerning these Grand Heads of Christian Divinity, viz. the Corruption and Degeneracy of Humane Nature, with the True Original of it (the Defection of our First Parents) the Propagation of Sin and Mortality, our Restoration and Reconciliation by Christ's Blood, the Eminency and Excellency of his Priesthood, the Efficacy of his Death, the full Satisfaction thereby made to the Divine Justice, and his being made an All-sufficient Sacrifice for Sin. Here are peculiar Discoveries concerning Christ's Righteousness, and our Justification by it, concerning Election, Adoption, Sanctification, or the New Birth, and particularly Saving Faith, which is so signal
a part

the Causes of Atheism. III

a part of it. Here the Nature of the Gospel, and the New Covenant, the Riches of God's Mercy in the way of Salvation by Jesus Christ, the Certainty of the Resurrection of Humane Bodies, and of the Future Glory, are fully displayed. These are the Matters of *Faith* contain'd in the *Epistles*, and they are essential and integral parts of the Gospel it self: and therefore it is no wonder that our Author, being sensible of this, would not vouchsafe to give us an Abstract of these Inspired Writings, but passes them by with some Contempt. And more especially (if I may conjecture) he doth this because he knew that there are so many and Frequent, and those so illustrious and eminent Attestations to the Doctrine of the ever to be Adored *Trinity* in these *Epistles*.

Nor

Nor is this any uncharitable conjecture, as the Reader may easily satisfy himself if he takes notice that this Writer interprets the *Son of God* to be no more than the *Messiah* he expounds *John* 14. 9. &c. after the Antitrinitarian mode, whereas generally Divines understand some part of those words concerning the Divinity of our Saviour. He makes *Christ* and *Adam* to be the *Sons of God* in the same senses, viz. by their Birth, as the *Racovians* generally do, and so he interprets *Luke* 1. 35. *John* 5. 26, according to their Standard. When he proceeds to mention the *Advantages* and *Benefits* of *Christ's* Coming into the world, and appearing in the flesh, he hath not one syllable of his Satisfying for us, or by his Death purchasing Life and Salvation, or any thing that sounds like it.

it. This and several other things which might be offered to the Reader shew that he is all over Socinianized; and moreover that his design was to exclude the belief of the Blessed *Trinity* in this Undertaking of his, viz. to prove that the believing of Christ to be the Messiah is the only Point of Faith that is necessary and saving. All the other Articles and Doctrines must fall a sacrifice to the Darling Notion of the Antitrinitarians; namely that Christ is not the True God, and coessential with his Father. For the sake of this one Point they are all dispatch'd out of the world, and are made by him Martyrs to this Cause. One could scarcely imagine that a person of Ingenuity and Good Sense should go this way to work. Which inclines me to think that the Ingenious

nious Gentleman who is suppos'd by some to be the Author of this Treatise is not really so. I am apt to believe that the world is impos'd upon in this matter, for in this present Attempt there are none of those Noble Strokes which are visible in that Person's Writings, and which have justly gain'd him a fair repute. That Vivacity of thought, that Elevation of mind, that Vein of Sense and Reason, yea and of Elocution too which runs through his Works are all extinct here: only he begins as 'twere to recover himself about the Close when he comes to speak of the Laws of Christian Morality. Some may attribute this Flatness to the Ill Cause he manages; but for my part, I question whether we have the right Author, I can't perswade my self but that there is an *Error*
of

of the Person : at least I will charitably presume so, because I have so good an opinion of the Gentleman who writ of *Humane Understanding and Education*.

But what is the ground of the foresaid Assertion? What makes him contend for One Single Article, with the Exclusion of all the rest? He pretends it is this, that all men ought to understand their Religion. And I agree with him in this; but I ask him, may not a man understand those Articles of Faith which I mention'd out of the *Gospel* and *Epistles*, if they be explain'd to him, as well as that One which he speaks of? Why then must there be but One Article, and no more? But he, notwithstanding this, goes on, and urges that there must be nothing in Christianity that is not plain, and exactly

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actly level to all mens Mother-wit
and common apprehension. For
* God considered the poor of the world,
and the bulk of mankind: the Christi-
an Religion is suited to vulgar capaci-
ties, and hath only * such Articles
as the labouring and illiterate man may
comprehend. The Writers and Wran-
glers in Religion fill it with Niceties,
and dress it up with Notions, (viz.
the Trinity, Christ's Satisfaction,
&c.) which they make necessary and
fundamental parts of it. But the bulk
of mankind have not leisure for Learn-
ing and Logick: and therefore there
must be no such doctrine as that
concerning the Trinity, the Incarna-
tion of the Son of God, and the like,
which are above the capacity and
comprehension of the Vulgar. And
in the Entrance of his book he hath
the same notion, for he tells us that

* P. 302. † P. 302.

the Scriptures are a collection of writings designed by God for the instruction of the illiterate bulk of mankind, (for he is much taken with this phrase, you see, *the bulk of mankind*) whereby he understands the Ignorant and Unlearned Multitude, the *Mob*, as he calls it in another place. Surely this Gentleman is afraid of *Captain Tom*, and is going to make a Religion for his Myrmidons: and to please them he gives them as little of this kind as he possibly can, he contracts all into One Article, and will trouble them with no more. Now then the sum of all that he aims at is this, that we must not have any Point of Doctrine whatsoever in our Religion that the *Mob* doth not at the very first naming of it perfectly understand and agree to. We are come to a fine pass indeed: the Venerable
Mob

Mob must be ask'd what we must believe: and nothing must be receiv'd as an Article of Faith but what those Illiterate Clubmen vote to be such. The *Rabble* are no *System-makers*, no *Creed-makers*; and therefore away with *Systems* and *Creeds*, and let us have but One Article, though it be with the defiance of all the rest, which are of equal necessity with that One.

Towards the close of his Enterprize he hath a fling (and that a Shrewd one) at the *Dissenters*, telling them that * *their Congregations and their Teachers understand not the Controversies at this time so warmly manag'd among them.* Nay the Teachers themselves have been pleas'd to make him their Confessor, and to acknowledge to him that

* Page. 303.

they understand not the difference in debate between them. Why? because they (as well as the Conformists) have Obscure Notions and Speculations, such as *Justification*, the *Trinity*, *Satisfaction*, &c. terms that all the bulk of mankind are unacquainted with: whereas Religion should have no Difficulties and Mysteries in it. The very Manner of every thing in Christianity must be clear and intelligible, every thing must be presently comprehended by the weakest noddle, or else it is no part of Religion, especially of Christianity, which yet is call'd the * *Mystery of Godliness*: but this being in the *Epistles*, it is no great matter; we are not to mind what they say.

Thus we see what is the Reason why he reduces all Belief to

* 1 Tim. 3. 16.

that one Article before rehearsed: as if the other Main Points which I produced were not as *easily learnt* and *understood* as This; as if there were any thing more difficult in this Proposition [The Father, Son and Holy Ghost are One God, or Divine Nature] than in that other [Jesus is the Messiah]. Truly if there be any Difficulty, it is in this latter, for here is an *Hebrew* word first to be explain'd before the *Mob* (as he styles it) can understand the Proposition. Why therefore doth this Author, who thinks it absurd * *to talk Arabick* to the Vulgar, talk *Hebrew* to them, unless he be of opinion (which no body else is of) that they understand this Language better than that? Or, suppose he tells the Rabble that *Messiah* signi-

* Page 302.

fies *Anointed*, what then? Unless he explains that word to them, it is still unintelligible. So that it appears hence that this Article which he hath spent so much time about, is no more level to the understanding of the Vulgar than that of the *Holy Trinity*, yea it is not so much.

To conclude, this Gentleman and his fellows are resolved to be *Unitarians*; they are for *One* Article of Faith, as well as *One* Person in the Godhead; and there is as much reason for one as the other, that is, none at all. But it doth not become me perhaps to pronounce this so peremptorily, and therefore I appeal to the Judicious and Impartial Reader; desiring him to judge of what I have suggested. But this I will say, if these Learned men were not highly

prejudiced and prepossessed, they would discern the Evil and Mischief of their Assertion: they would perceive that when the Catholick Faith is thus brought down to One Single Article, it will soon be reduced to none: the Unit will dwindle into a Cypher.

The Proper Remedy here is to consider that it is unlawful* to *add unto, or diminish ought from the Written Word*: yea, a Curse is threatned against those that † *add to or take away from the Scriptures*; for if it be criminal, and deserves a Curse to deal thus with the book of *Deuteronomy* or of the *Revelation*, then by the same reason those that *add to or detract from any other part of the Holy Scriptures* are undeniably guilty, and are obnoxious to the Divine Plagues. I

* Deut. 4. 2. † Rev. 22. 18, 19.

hope such as practise the *latter* will seriously think of it, and for the future believe themselves concern'd to embrace *All* the necessary and fundamental Articles of Faith, as well as *One* of them.

Thus I have briefly discover'd the Springs and Sources of *Atheism*, and I have endeavour'd all along (more or less) to stop them up, and hinder the current of them. Now, for the close of all, let me add these *Inferences* from the whole,

I. We ought to bewail the spreading *Atheism* of this Age wherein we live. Of old there were but few that openly profess'd it. There are reckon'd up *four* several sorts or forms of *Atheism* by a late * Learned Writer, viz. *Anaximandrian*, *Democritick*, *Stoical*, *Stratonical*, and yet

* Dr. Cudworth's Intellectual System.

there was scarcely one of these that was a downright denying of a God. Some have given *Diagoras*, *Theodorus*, *Protagoras*, the title of *Atheists*, and have thought them to be absolutely such: but others, upon a strict search, are of opinion, that they deserv'd not that infamous Name; yea, they find that they were great Asserters of a Deity. The first of these was accused of Atheism, and banish'd for it by the *Athenians*; not that he denied a God, but because he derided the Feigned Gods of his time, whom the *Athenians* had such a reverence for. The second passes for an Atheist; but those who have narrowly enquired into things tell us, that he got that Name because he spoke against the Idolatrous Worship of the *Grecians*, and had a kindness (it is probable) for another Religion: for
being

being a *Cyrenian*, and acquainted with King *Ptolomee*, he came to have some Intercourse with the *Jews of Alexandria*, and had some notice of the True God. The third was reputed and call'd by some an Atheist because he doubted of the Truth and Reality of the *Gentile Gods*. So *Anaxagoras* (another Greek Philosopher) was arraign'd for Atheism by the *Athenians* because he denied the Sun to be God, and freely discours'd against the other Pagan Deities. Thus the malicious Accusers of *Socrates* represented him as an Enemy to the Gods: part of the Crime charged on him, and for which he was condemn'd, was his speaking against the Traditions and Fables of the *Poets* concerning the Gods, and his declaring them to be lewd and wicked. To give this Great Man

his due, he was so far from being an Atheist, that he died a Martyr for a Deity. Only to gratifie the Vulgar, and that he might not go off unlamented, after he had drank his Poison he requested his Friends to offer a Cock for him to *Æsculapius*. Some put *Democritus* into the Catalogue of the Ancient Atheists, but if we read his Life in *Laertius*, we shall find that they have little reason to do so. *Lucretius* is the most suspicious man of all, and *Lucian* may be join'd with him, the former a serious, the latter a jocular Atheist.

But it is sad to consider that the number of this sort of men hath been exceedingly augmented since, * *David Perron* undertook in the presence of King *Henry the Third of France*, to prove that there is

* *L'Histpire d' Henry 3.*

no God. *Mersennus*, in his Commentary on *Genesis*, tells us, that in the Year when he wrote it, viz. 1623. there was a vast multitude of them in *France*: there were at least fifty thousand Atheists in the City of *Paris* at that time, and in one house sometimes a dozen were to be found. A worthy * Author, whom I had occasion to mention before, acquaints us on his own Knowledge, that Atheism was very common and rampant in most parts of *Italy*. Not to mention *Machiavel*, *Arétine*, &c. it cannot be denied that *Vanenus* openly declared and profess'd himself an Atheist, and died so at the Stake. Indeed I am apt to suspect those who tell us there are scarcely any of this Perswasion in the World. Thus † one declares that *he bath*

* In his *Europæ Speculum*.
from *Oxford*.

† An Essay in a Letter

travelled many Countries, yet could never meet with any Atheists, which are few if any: all the noise and clamour is against Castles in the Air, i. e. such and no other he fancies them to be. But to come nearer, our Own Nation hath produced too many of this kind. Even in this Civilized Christian Protestant Country there are those that are infected with this Cursed Infidelity, and despise all Religion and a God. It is an unquestionable Truth, that there are in this great City of the Kingdom constant Cabals and Assemblies of Profess'd Atheists, where they debate the Great Point of the Existence of an Infinite Spirit that governs the World, and in the close determine in the Negative. I have sometime accidentally happen'd into the Company of, and held Discourse with some that acknowledge they belong to that Society; and they

they have not been ashamed to own whatever is done in it. Mr. Hobbes is their Great Master and Lawgiver. I find that they pay a huge reverence to him. If they acknowledge any *Divine Thing*, it is *He*. If they own any *Scriptures*, they are his *Writings*. The Language that I lately met with from the mouth of one that was, I suppose, a *Well-wisher* (according to his poor ability) to Mr. Hobbes's *Mathematicks*, was this, *His Leviathan is the best Book in the world next to the Bible: He himself was a Man of great Piety, and is spoken against by none but the Priests*. And whom do they (for this man speaks the sense of the rest) mean by *Priests* but the *Ministers of Religion*? So they would have a *Bible* and *Piety* without these; which is as much as to say, they would have neither of them. But indeed this man had a way of being something

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thing more plausible than his Fel-
lows, and would vouchsafe to men-
tion the *Bible* and *Piety*, and there-
by seem as it were to allow of such
things; whereas Others are wont to
laugh at *them* as well as at the Per-
sons they call *Priests*, for they go
together. I may say truly, it is
grown *Fashionable* to deride what-
ever is Sacred, and to talk like an
Atheist. In some Companies it shall
be question'd whether a Person be
a *Gentleman* if he does not give
Proofs of his being *Prophane*. To
defend the wildest Principles, and
to ridicule Religion, is counted one
certain mark of a *Wit*. He that
doth not shew his *Raillery* against
Virtue and *Goodness*, and speaks
not contemptibly of God and Re-
ligion, is not a *Man of Parts*. This
is the Sentiment and Perswasion of
a great part of this Nation. I would
not libel the Land of our Nativity;
yea,

yea, I rather heartily wish that what I have said on this occasion might receive a Confutation. But it is too evident that I speak truth; it is too manifest to be denied that there are every where considerable numbers of men who openly renounce the Existence of God. *David's* Atheist was modest, and only said in his Heart, *There is no God*; on which account some Atheistical Spirits now-a-days may think perhaps he deserved the Title of *Fool* which the Psalmist gives him. But these count themselves a *Wiser* rank of Atheists, because they say *this with their mouths*, and speak it aloud, audibly proclaiming their Opinion, and being very zealous to gain Profelytes to it.

2. Let us abhor the Converse and Society of those Persons whom we know to be of this Character. And truly they are very common every where.

where. It is prodigious to see how they daily encrease. There is scarcely a Town where there are not some that may justly be reckon'd in this number. Do not mistake me. There are some deluded People who are apt to censure all as *Atheists* that are not of their way. The * Primitive Christians were thus stigmatized, and usually called by that name because they did not comply with the Pagan Worship and Usages. If a man discourses not according to some mens fond Notions and Bigotisms; if he speaks against their superstitious Practices, he presently hath this Brand set upon him. There are those that call all Persons *Atheists* and *Hypocrites* that hold not the same Principles with themselves. Yea, if a man be a great Student in Philosophy, some weaker People may be apt to fix this Character on

* Just. Mart. Apol. 2.

him. As heretofore all that had skill in *Mathematicks* were said and thought to deal in Art Magick; so in the opinion of some at this day men of great Art and Learning are voted *Atheists* by them, and almost every *Physician* hath this Censure past on him by men of weak minds. But I hope none of those I now speak to are so unwise and weak, or at least not so uncharitable and censorious as to bestow this Ignominious Epithet on those to whom it doth not belong. By an *Atheist* or a person very much disposed to be so, I mean one that hath an Enmity to the very notion of a Divine Infinite Being, a Supreme Immaterial Substance, that is the Sovereign Author of Nature, and the First Cause of all things, from whom all things were, and on whom they depend. I mean such a one as owns no Allegiance to this Divine Ruler
and

and Sovereign, and in his Words and Actions discovers this to the World. And accordingly he is one that acknowledges not the Infinite Power, Wisdom, Goodness, and Justice of God in the Government of all things: he speaks irreverently of all that appertains to Religion and Godliness: he laughs at the profound Mysteries and sublime Doctrines of Christianity: he endeavours always to diminish the esteem of Sacred things: yea, he will be jesting and drolling on them if he hath any Talent that way. If he be open-hearted, and not upon the Reserve, he will tell them that Religion is a mere Invention of Politick Heads to awe the Multitude, and to keep the World in good order. He is one that blasts Religion with the ignominious Title of a Popular Cheat, and labours to persuade others to do the like. Where
do

you find these Characters in any person, you may conclude without breach of Charity, that he is an *Atheist*.

And it is the Company of such that I exhort you to beware of, and wholly to avoid. It is almost incredible that such great numbers should be every day led away with this *Ignis Fatuus*, and plung'd into Bogs and Mire, never to be pluck'd out thence. Therefore take heed what Society you mingle your selves with in this Dangerous Age. Sit not with the known Despisers of God and Religion, for they will insensibly instill their poison into you. By frequent associating with them you will learn to resemble them. Wherefore fly from them as from a Serpent, and be not prevail'd with by any Entreaties or Threats to hold Correspondence with them. Assure your selves of this, that the Title of

K *Atheist*

Atheist is the most Reproachful and Detestable one imaginable, though some of late who glory in their shame entertain other thoughts. Nay, some of these Persons seem to be partly sensible of it, and change the name into that of *Deist*. At this day *Atheism* it self is slyly call'd *Deism* by those that indeed are *Atheists*. Though they retain the thing, yet they would disguise it by a false Name, and thereby hide the Heinousness of it. But let us not be deceived and blinded by pretended Shews, but throughly apprehend the Vileness of this Opinion which some endeavour to palliate. It is a very denying the Creed of Nature, it is a Renuntiation of that which the very Devils believe, and tremble at. It is briefly but fully represented in St. *Cyprian's* words, * *This*

* *Hæc est summa delicti nolle agnoscere quem ignorare non possis. De Vanit. Idol.*

(saith

(saith he) *is the sum of this most heinous Crime, that those who are guilty of it wilfully refuse to acknowledge Him whom they cannot be ignorant of.* For their own Beings and Natures furnish them with Arguments for a God: and if they did not obstinately shut their eyes, they must needs behold a Deity. Therefore to be *Atheists*, or *without God in the world* (as the * Apostle speaks) cannot but be a Great Prodigy; it is Unaccountable almost (if the Degeneracy of Mankind were not so great as it is) that the *World* it self should not administer to mens Thoughts Convictive Arguments of a Divinity. Whence it hath been observ'd by a very Wise Man, that there never was any Miracle wrought by God to convert an *Atheist*, because the Light of Nature might have led him to confess

* Ephes. 2. 12.

a God. This shews how detestable and pernicious *Atheism* is; and much more might be said to this purpose. Wherefore I hope I need not multiply words when I call upon you to keep out of the Company of those men who you know are infected with this hellish Poison.

3. Let us labour to work in our selves and others a profound Sense of that *Great God* with whom we have to do. Generally the Belief of a Deity is from Custom and Education, because it is the Perswasion of the Place and the Persons we converse with: but we should not content our selves with this, but arrive to the Knowledge of the true *Grounds* and *Reasons* of this Belief. Seeing this is the First thing in Religion, and no Man can be Religious and Vertuous unless he believes there is a God, let us fortifie our Minds against *Atheism* by those
seve-

several *Arguments* and *Considerations* which are wont to be propounded by Learned and Religious * Writers: that we may as thoroughly be perswaded of this Great Truth as of our own Being, which a Great Philosopher makes one of his First and Indubitable Principles.

But especially view the Works of the Creation, and perswade your selves of this, that a Material World without an Immaterial Cause of it; is mere Nonsense. Look abroad, and behold the Heavens and the Earth, and all the Furniture of them; there you may believe a Deity, because you do as 'twere see it. The Creator is made visible by his Works. Every thing in the Sensible World is an † Image, a Picture, a

* *Fab. Faventini Diss. 4. adv. Atheos. Tho. Campanella Spizel Scrutin. Atheismi. Muller. Atheismus devotus. Jan. & Joach. Jan. Disputat. contr. Atheos. Dr. More, Mr. Smith, Sir Charles Woofley, Dr. Tenison, (now Archbishop of Cant.) Dr. Cudworth, Dr. Barrow.*

† *Εἰκὼν, εἰδωλον, ἵχνη.* Plato.

Footstep of the Deity. From this Exquisite Fabrick we infallibly gather the Existence of its All-wise Architect and Moderator. Of which I shall give the Reader a particular Demonstration in a short time. And that you may effectually extirpate Atheism out of your minds, frequently peruse the H. Scriptures. Read God in his own Book. There you will certainly inform your selves concerning the Superintendence of Spiritual or Immaterial Agents, viz. *Angels*, which makes way for the Belief of a *God*, who is a Spirit. There you will meet with those Wonderful Operations and Events which can no ways be solv'd without granting an Omnipotent and All-wise Disposer of things. And there you will find this Supreme Governour of the World communicating his Will and Pleasure to Mankind. I question not but one
great

great Reason (and I might have mention'd it among the rest) why men are so disposed to be *Atheists*, is because they never, or very seldom, consult this Holy Volume: they refuse to hear God Himself speaking to them in these Writings. Wherefore I recommend to you the serious and frequent reading of the Bible as the most effectual means to confirm you in the Belief of a Deity. Assure your selves that this Book is the best Antidote against Atheism.

4. and lastly, Labour to be truly Religious and Holy; beg the Divine Assistance to sanctifie you in your Hearts and Lives; and thereby you will be let into the intimate knowledge of this Grand Verity which I have been discoursing of. You will then more sensibly understand and be convinced of it than by all the Arguments that
can

can be offer'd: or rather, this one will make all the rest effectual. Whereas on the contrary, Men of Unsanctified Minds and Profane Lives despise and scoff at that of which they have no experience, and will not believe the Existence and Power of God which they never felt. Strive then by an Inward Experiment to confute Atheism: so that you may not have any Inclination to *say in your hearts* (though you do not utter it with your tongues) *There is no God*, but that you may be so strongly convinced of the contrary Truth that you may be able to assert it with a firm and unshaken Belief, and from an internal sense of it on your hearts, to attest the reality of it to the whole World.

F I N I S.

E R R A T.

Pag. 104. lin. 8. dele *ro*.